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Western Governors Discuss the West as "Nation's Energy Breadbasket"

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Phoenix - Noting that the West is the nation's "energy breadbasket," Western governors meeting here over the weekend offered their perspectives on what is happening in their states and additional opportunities for working collectively on transmission planning, siting and reliability.

"Energy underpins everything we do. Western Governors can show the country how balanced and common-sense policies allow for responsible development of our nation's energy resources. This is the path to a clean, secure, and affordable energy future," said Gov. Gary R. Herbert, Chairman of the Western Governors Association. "The time for half-measures is past. We need an energy policy big enough to satisfy the world's growing appetite for energy. Over the next six months, Western Governors will be working on developing a 10-year energy plan for the West that can help us achieve that energy future."

Gov. Matt Mead of Wyoming moderated the session, which included on the panel Jeffrey Immelt, Chairman and CEO of General Electric Company; John Conger, Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations and Environment; J. Brett Harvey, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer, CONSOL Energy; Adam Sieminski, Administrator of the U.S. Energy Information Administration; and Dan Reicher, Executive Director, Steyer-Taylor Center for Energy Policy and Finance, Stanford University.

"Wyoming is the largest exporter of BTUs in the country, but when I talk about getting energy right and moving forward, it's not just about Wyoming, it's about all of the Western states, the country - even the world," Mead said. "What's important is the role energy plays in creating jobs and getting the economy back on track. The cost of energy affects everything in our lives, from housing to food."

"Too often, the discussion is 'do you want energy or the environment.' We have to reject that question. We need, and should expect, both."

Western governors have long been leaders on energy policy, starting with the 2006 report from the Clean and Diversified Energy Advisory Committee. Since then the governors have developed strategies and issued several reports on Western Renewable Energy Zones; Alternative Transportation Fuels; Residential, Institutional and Industrial Energy Efficiency; Integration of Renewable Energy into the Western Electricity Grid; and the Future of Nuclear Power.

Gov. Butch Otter noted that Idaho is not only a consumer, but also an exporter of electrical energy.

"One big factor -- suspense that we have -- is that we can produce energy more cheaply and abundantly, but sadly it's a problem getting it from where it's produced to where you want it to go," Otter said. "Bureaucracy, litigation, and policies developed in Congress cannot survive past one election cycle."

More information about the WGA energy program can be found at www.westgov.org.

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